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House of Representatives

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN ED CASE OF HAWAII THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2005

INTRODUCTION OF A BILL TO EXPAND THE AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO INCLUDE HAWAII

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill to expand USDA's Agricultural Management Assistance Program to include my State of Hawaii.

The Agricultural Management Assistance Program provides cost-sharing assistance under contracts of three to ten years in fifteen specified states to help producers construct or improve water management and irrigation structures, plant trees, control soil erosion, practice integrated pest management, practice organic farming, develop value-added processing, and enter into futures, hedging, or options contracts to reduce production, price, or revenue risk. This worthy program was established in 2000 to benefit states where participation in Federal crop insurance programs has been historically low.

Hawaii, which was not included among the fifteen initial states, certainly qualifies based on this criterion, as there are relatively few Federal crop insurance programs for the crops we grow in Hawaii and those we have are only a few years old. Additionally, the activities allowed under this program coincide very well with the real needs of farmers in Hawaii, especially in relation to water management and irrigation, soil erosion, pest management, organic farming, and value-added processing.

The 2002 Farm Bill authorized annual funding of \$20 million from FY2003 through FY2007. In FY2004, there were 723 active contracts and a total of \$10.2 million was spent.

There is clearly adequate room in this program for Hawaii, which is dead last among all the 50 States in agricultural assistance received as a percentage of the value of its agricultural production. Hawaii receives less than 1 cent per dollar of agricultural value compared with the nationwide average of 6 cents.

I ask for my colleagues' support for including my state of Hawaii in this important program.